



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE TRIAL COURT
PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT DEPARTMENT
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PRESS RELEASE

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PROBATE AND FAMILY COURT ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM ATTENDANCE STANDING ORDER

The Probate and Family Court Department announces the deletion of Standing Order 1-03 relative to Parent Education Program Attendance and has inserted in its place Standing Order 4-08.

The change to the Standing Order requires that the parties pay \$80.00 to the provider in advance of the class to offset the cost of materials and facilitators. This fee may be reduced to \$5.00 upon a party submitting a copy of his or her allowed Affidavit of Indigency and Request for Waiver, Substitution or State Payment of Fees and Costs. Parties have paid \$65.00 to the providers since 2003.

The Probate and Family Court now has 31 providers who offer the program at 63 locations around the state. The program is also offered in Spanish at 3 locations. Massachusetts was one of the first states to include mandatory parent education as part of the divorce process in 1994. Now, a majority of states have implemented similar mandatory parent education programs across the country. Programs help parents understand their children's emotional needs and the effects of divorce on child behavior and development. The programs also provide information to parents about constructive conflict management, dispute resolution methods and practical suggestions on parenting after divorce as well as information about available community resources. All approved programs are required to disseminate consumer satisfaction surveys to the parents at the end of each class. The Probate and Family Court has found that a common theme keeps arising in these surveys in which parents state that they wish they had attended the parent education classes sooner in the divorce process.

The new Standing Order shall become effective April 7, 2008.